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# **“The wayward political Apostle: Andrew Michael Ramsay”**

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## **Abstract**

Andrew Michael Ramsay was a Scots-born naturalised Frenchman, whose search for spiritual fulfilment led him from Scotland to the European continent and eventually to France. When Ramsay initially arrived in France he stayed at Cambrai with the Archbishop François Fénelon, who not only converted Ramsay to Catholicism but helped to inadvertently shape Ramsay’s political theory. After the death of Fénelon in 1715 Ramsay became the editor of his papers and works and he used this opportunity to not only publish the some of the prelate’s works but to also promulgate his own political thought ostensibly based upon the political principles of Fénelon. Ramsay’s *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil* (1721) and his biography of Fénelon, the *Vie de Fénelon* (1723), were used by Ramsay to promote a Jacobite restoration in Britain while creating an inaccurate demonstration of the Archbishop’s political legacy.

## **Keywords:**

Ramsay

Fénelon

Monarchy

Reform

Civil Government

Popular Sovereignty

Biography

## **The wayward political Apostle: Andrew Michael Ramsay**

The aim of this paper is to outline Andrew Michael Ramsay's application of the Archbishop François Fénelon's political principles in the *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil* (London, 1721), and the *Histoire de la vie de Fénelon* (Le Haye, 1723).<sup>1</sup> The political thought promulgated in the *Essay* and supported by the *Vie de Fénelon*, was an attempt by Ramsay to tackle the '*maladies*' within civil government: notably an excess of political liberty in the people, and the power of popular sovereignty. Ramsay utilised his connection with Fénelon, as the editor of his papers and works, to imply a special understanding of Fénelon's unpublished political thought. Indeed, in the *Preface* to the *Essay* Ramsay wrote, '*Le seul mérite de l'Auteur est d'avoir été nourri pendant plusieurs années des Lumieres, & [sic] des Sentiments de feu ...Fénelon ...Il a profité des Instructions de cet Illustre Prélat, pour écrire cet Essai.*'<sup>2</sup> This intimation was sustained in the *Vie de Fénelon*, as Ramsay exploited his position as editor to advance a Jacobite restoration under James Francis Edward Stuart (1688-1766) in Britain. The unfortunate consequence for the political legacy of Fénelon was that these principles have created an inexact interpretation by numerous biographers of Fénelon's political thought. For the veracity of Ramsay's *Vie* was seemingly unquestioned, as he was Fénelon's first biographer and he had lived with his subject. As a consequence, Ramsay's account of Fénelon's political conversations in the *Vie* were deemed to be accurate, and the theory of the *Essay* merely an extension of these

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<sup>1</sup> In the paper, I will focus on the second edition of the *Essay* and the *Vie de Fénelon* as they were used in conjunction by Ramsay to express a support of Jacobitism.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Michael Ramsay, *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil*, vi.

conversations. This paper will therefore demonstrate how Ramsay's biography helped to maintain an inaccurate political legacy.

Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686-1743) was an unusual character and lived an interesting life as an editor, biographer, tutor, Jacobite, freemason, and man of letters.<sup>3</sup> Initially, an itinerant search for spiritual fulfilment led him from Scotland to London to the Continent and eventually France.<sup>4</sup> This spiritual journey led to Ramsay's association with the Archbishop François Fénelon (1651-1715), famed author of the second most successful work of the eighteenth century in Europe after the Bible: *Télémaque* (1699). The basis of this association is unclear but what is certain is that Ramsay stayed with Fénelon for a period of approximately two or three years from August 1710.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Ramsay was converted to

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<sup>3</sup> See Albert Cherel, *Un Aventurier Religieux au XVIIIe siècle: André-Michel Ramsay* (Paris: Librairie Académique, 1926); G.D. Henderson, *Chevalier Ramsay* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd, 1952), and Scott Mandelbrote, 'Ramsay, Andrew Michael [The Jacobite Sir Andrew Michael, Baronet] (1686-1743), Philosopher and Jacobite Sympathiser,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ramsay also produced a short autobiography which mainly concentrated on his religious and philosophical ideas, the *Anecdotes de la vie de Messire André Michel de Ramsay ...dictés par lui meme peu de jours avant sa mort pressé par les instances réitérées de son Epouze* (Aix-en-Provence: Méjanes Bibliotheque, MS.No.1188).

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Michael Ramsay, *Anecdotes*, 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> The beginning of Ramsay's stay with Fénelon at Cambrai, is recorded as August 1710 by Jacques Le Brun in the *Chronologie* to his edition of Fénelon's *Oeuvres*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997. It is unclear when Ramsay left Cambrai, but a letter from Ramsay dated the 20th

Catholicism by Fénelon, and in 1716, Ramsay was offered the role as editor of the Archbishop's works by his nephew the Marquis de Fénelon. His role as the editor of Fénelon's papers saw the beginning of an important decade for Ramsay, and it is within this period that Ramsay wrote his political works: the *Essay de Politique* (1719); its second edition, the *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil* (1721), and *Les voyages de Cyrus* (1727).<sup>6</sup> His time with Fénelon inspired him to attempt to emulate his former host, and his political output was apparently a replication of Fénelon's principles. However, Ramsay's description of Fénelon's character so upset the Marquis due to its inaccuracy, he was dismissed from his position as editor, and the Marquis employed the historian Prosper Marchand to write an accurate biography of his uncle.<sup>7</sup> An attempt that proved to be too late,

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March 1714 shows him to be living with Madame Guyon (1648-1717) at Blois, see *Mystics of the North-East*, (ed) G.D. Henderson (Aberdeen: The Third Spalding Club, 1934), 53.

<sup>6</sup> For discussion of the *Essay* see, Cherel, *Un Aventurier Religieux au XVIIIe siècle: André-Michel Ramsay*; G.D. Henderson, *Chevalier Ramsay*; Jean Molino, "L' 'Essai philosophique sur le gouvernement civil.' Ramsay ou Fénelon?" in *La Régence*. (ed) Henri Coulet (Paris: 1970), and Gabriel Glickman, "Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686–1743), the Jacobite Court and the English Catholic Enlightenment," *Eighteenth-Century Thought*, (eds) Earl Havens and James G. Buickerood, Vol. 3 (2007). For *Les Voyages de Cyrus* see, Doohwan Ahn, "From Greece to Babylon: The political thought of Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686-1743)," *History of European Ideas*, xxx (2011).

<sup>7</sup> On Ramsay's dismissal see G.D. Henderson, *Chevalier Ramsay*, 67. Prosper Marchand's biography, *A short account of the Life of the late M. Franc. De Saligna de la Mothe Fénelon*, can be found in *Proper Heads of Self-Examination for a King. Drawn up for Use for the late Dauphin of France, Father to his present Majesty K. Lewis XV, whilst Duke of Burgundy. By M. De Fénelon, Archbishop and Duke of Cambray. Together with the Author's Life*, A

as Ramsay's depiction of Fénelon had already become the accepted account of Fénelon's life.<sup>8</sup>

The association with Fénelon proved to be very important for Ramsay during this time, and it aided his developing involvement within the Paris Jacobite movement. While his Jacobite connections extended back to Scotland and his membership of the Garden Circle,<sup>9</sup> his active involvement in Jacobitism occurred in Paris. There he forged relationships with men such as John Erskine (1675-1732), the Earl of Mar and Jacobite leader of the disastrous 1715 uprising, Thomas Southcott, an English Benedictine (1678-1748), and Father Lewis Innes (1651-1738) from the Scots College. Together with Southcott Ramsay managed to muster up support in France to attack a British tax imposed on Catholics. Ramsay's role as the editor of Fénelon's papers aided his successful lobbying of the bishop of Fréjus (1653-1743), an associate of Fénelon and later Cardinal Fleury, to protest to Walpole about his tax's

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*complete Catalogue of His Works, And Memoirs of his Family. Translated from the French* (London: 1747).

<sup>8</sup> See Albert Cherel, *Fénelon au XVIIIe Siècle en France (1715-1820): Son Prestige – Son Influence* (Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, 79, Boulevard Saint-Germain, 1917), 31.

<sup>9</sup> The Garden Circle was led by George Garden (1649-1733), Scottish Episcopal clergyman and controversialist, and James Garden (1645-1726), and it contained a number of staunch Jacobites, including Alexander Forbes, Lord Pitsligo (1678-1762), the philosopher and Jacobite army officer. For a discussion of the members of the Garden Circle and a selection of their correspondence see, *Mystics of the North-East*, (ed.) G.D. Henderson.

high rate. Ramsay's zeal and ability to make contacts impressed the Jacobite court, and in turn, he dedicated the *Essay* to James Stuart (James III).<sup>10</sup>

After his dismissal as the editor of the works and papers of Fénelon following the publication of the *Vie de Fénelon* in 1723, which was also dedicated to James, Ramsay was seemingly admitted into the periphery of the Jacobite court. He was offered the role of tutor to the young prince Charles (1720-88) at Rome, which proved to be a disastrous experience for Ramsay. Ramsay had already nurtured his 'most significant rapport' with the Earl of Mar,<sup>11</sup> and had also become strongly attached to Lord Lansdowne and General Dillon. These three men had previously formed 'The Triumvirate' around James in the Jacobite leadership, but by the time Ramsay went to Rome they lacked influence and men such as James Murray (1690-1770) and John Hay (1691-1740) had become pivotal figures at court. Mar was in fact viewed as dangerous at court,<sup>12</sup> and both Hay and Murray were aggressively attempting to replace him as James' Chief Minister. While these connections secured him the position of tutor, after only a few months he returned to Paris with 100 guineas amidst accusations of dismissal as Mar's spy in the following February. James, formerly impressed by Ramsay's association with Fénelon wrote that he was: '*un esprit tracasseur et superficiel, occupé de lui-même*' possessing neither '*les solides principes et maxims de la véritable morale de la*

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<sup>10</sup> Ramsay, *Essai philosophique sur le gouvernement civil*, i. The publication of the first edition corresponded with the failed Spanish-funded Jacobite uprising of that year, while the second edition of the *Essay* was released in 1721, coinciding with the planned Atterbury Plot (1722).

<sup>11</sup> Pauline McLynn, "Factionalism among the Exiles in France: The case of Chevalier Ramsay and Bishop Atterbury" (Huntingdon: The Royal Stuart Society, 1989. The Royal Stuart Papers XXXIII), 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 3-4

*bonne politique.*'<sup>13</sup> In a later, more circumspect frame of mind he wrote: 'Ramsay is an odd body. He exposed himself strangely here to myself and many others, but as yet I will be charitable enough to think him a madd man.'<sup>14</sup> Ramsay's return to Paris signified the end of his formal ties with the Jacobite court, and from that point he concentrated on tutoring and writing, most notably the Fénelon-inspired *Les voyages de Cyrus* (1727), which won him renown across Europe.

## 1

Ramsay's biography is an odd work, as Fénelon features almost as a peripheral figure: the *Vie de Fénelon* was effectively a life of Fénelon that contained little of his life. The *Vie* focused on Ramsay's own conversion by Fénelon, the plight of Madame Guyon and the Quietism Affair, and a lesson (conversation) on government between Fénelon and James Stuart (the 'Old Pretender'). The political conversations of this meeting which took place in 1709 are recounted by Ramsay in the *Vie*.<sup>15</sup> An obvious problem with Ramsay's account of this meeting was that he did not visit Cambrai until 1710 and did not meet James until 1724. However, the *Vie* explained that he would provide an '*idée générale de ses principes sur la Politique, répandus dans le Télémaque & dans ses Dialogues des Morts don't il entretenoit souvent ce jeune Prince pendant son séjour à Cambray.*'<sup>16</sup> In reality, the inclusion of James Stuart enabled Ramsay to draw on the fame of Fénelon as an advocate of toleration and anti-absolutism throughout Europe. Ramsay was attempting to connect the Archbishop with the

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<sup>13</sup> James to Fréjus, (25<sup>th</sup> March 1725), RA Stuart 81/ 26, "Factionalism among the Exiles in France," 7.

<sup>14</sup> James to Murray (July 1725), *The Jacobite Court at Rome in 1719*, 135.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Michael Ramsay, *Histoire de la vie de Fénelon* (Le Haye: 1723), 147.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Michael Ramsay, *Histoire de la vie de Fénelon*, 182.



plight of James Stuart through Fénelon's political instruction and apparent approval of the prince without a crown: a modern Telemachus.<sup>17</sup>

According to Ramsay's account, Fénelon's '*tint, sur la Politique le meme langage que Mentor tient à Télémaque, Il lui fit voir les avantages qu'il pouvoit tirer de la forme du Gouvernement de son Païs, & des égards qu'il devoit avoir pour son Sénat.*'<sup>18</sup> Such a scheme of government set out by Fénelon to the prince at Cambrai, stated that all nations were from many different families under God who is the common father, and consequently '*l'autorité paternelle est le premier modèle des Gouvernemens.*'<sup>19</sup> The natural and universal law which governed each family ensured that the public good was pursued over the private

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<sup>17</sup> See Cherel, *Fénelon au XVIIIe Siècle en France (1715-1820): Son Prestige – Son Influence*, 98, and Jean Molino, "L'Essai philosophique sur le gouvernement civil.' Ramsay ou Fénelon?," 282. In *Chevalier Ramsay*, Henderson discusses the promotion of the Jacobite cause in the *Essay* (pp. 87-89), and he also discusses (p. 74), the removal of a letter by Fénelon included in the original French edition of the *Vie de Fénelon* (188-90) which was excised from the English edition at the behest of the British government due to its apparent support of James Stuart. The letter is dated 15<sup>th</sup> November 1709 and seemingly endorses James Stuart due to his acceptance of Fénelon's lessons from *Télémaque*. Yet, it is Ramsay's text which states James Stuart accepted the political lessons of Fénelon, Fénelon's letter actually details the character of '*le roi d'Angleterre*,' a title ascribed to James by many at the French court. A full version of this letter to the Duc de Bourgogne can be found in the *Correspondance de Fénelon, Tome XIV*, (eds) Jacques Le Brun and Irénée Noye (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1990), 165-66.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew Michael Ramsay, *Histoire de la vie de Fénelon*, 181-82.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 182.

interest of the individual. *‘L’amour du Peuple, le bien public, l’Intérêt general de la Société est donc la Loi immuable & universelle des Souverains.’*<sup>20</sup> A law that was *‘antécédente à tout contrat’* and from which all other laws stem.

This law was ensured by the ability of a monarch who had the supreme authority to act in the *‘dernier ressort’* (‘last resort’) through their control of the legislative and executive authority, which was the foundation of political unity and civil order. Those that govern must ensure this order by serving the public good as *‘il peut tout sur les Peuples.’*<sup>21</sup> The happiness of subjects was dependent on their *‘subordination’* and tradition: *‘La Liberté sans ordre est un Libertinage qui attire le Despotisme. L’Ordre sans la liberté est un Esclavage qui se perd dans l’Anarchie.’*<sup>22</sup> Princes *‘jaloux leur autorité veulent toujours l’étendre. Les peuples passionnez pour leur liberté veulent toujours l’augmenter.’*<sup>23</sup> The answer was to walk a middle path which avoided the chaos and tumult of revolution caused by this battle for supremacy between a king and his subjects. It was the duty of every wise King in this conflict, therefore, to desire only to be *‘l’Exécuteur des Loix, & d’avoir un Conseil supreme qui modère son autorité.’*<sup>24</sup> Ramsay concluded Fénelon’s political lesson by stating that his political maxims attempted to conserve the liberty of the people through their obedience and subordination to the monarch, in a society based on pure love and order.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 183.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 184.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 186.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 185.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 182.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 187-88.

In addition to these political sentiments expressed in the *Vie*, Ramsay further portrayed a Fénelon who advocated religious toleration and liberty of thought in a prince.<sup>26</sup> Ramsay claimed that the above quote had been taken from Book XXIII of *Télémaque* (Paris, 1717), and it was employed in both editions of the *Essay* to encourage religious toleration for the subjects of a king.<sup>27</sup> This use of *Télémaque* was out of context, for the original text considered the need for a king to remove himself from matters of faith.<sup>28</sup> Fénelon's meaning in *Télémaque* was quite different from that set out in the *Vie*. In *Télémaque*, Fénelon was discussing the necessity of a king to resist the temptation to subjugate religion (the Church) under his temporal power, as men must have full liberty to pursue religion unless they were not obedient. If they were not obedient then they must be 'repressed,' a desire Fénelon was to later express in the *Tables de Chaulnes* (1711). In this later work, Fénelon advocated an 'indépendance réciproque des deux puissances' spiritual and temporal.<sup>29</sup> Fénelon wanted to free both institutions of interference from the other, as they knew better how to run their own affairs. albeit with a great deal of co-operation and mutual assistance. An important part of Fénelon's Church, was its attack on sects and his insistence that it created a '*plan pour déraciner jansénisme*.'<sup>30</sup> Fénelon believed in one faith and that people must be returned to Catholicism, which he as a young priest educating Huguenot girls for the Bishop of Meaux, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704).<sup>31</sup> He wanted to root out those who practised

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 181.

<sup>27</sup> See *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil*, chapitre XI, 113.

<sup>28</sup> Fénelon, *Les aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse, Tome Second* (Paris: 1717), 481.

<sup>29</sup> Fénelon, *Tables de Chaulnes, Oeuvres, Tome II*, (ed) Jacques Le Brun (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 1093.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 1099.

<sup>31</sup> See Cardinal Bausset, *The Life of Fénelon, Vol. I*, 19-20.

Jansenism from the Church (at all levels), to avoid any possibility of schism. To achieve this he wanted the Benedictines to impose doctrinal rule.<sup>32</sup> The significance of this belief was that it countered Ramsay's depiction in the *Vie* of Fénelon as a bastion of religious toleration. This view was promulgated by Ramsay through his alteration of Fénelon's attack on absolutism in *Télémaque*, but it did not express a principle that existed in his political works. It was a method for implying the toleration of James Stuart, whose political ideology had been derived from his religiously tolerant teacher, Fénelon.

While Ramsay's delineation in the *Vie* of Fénelon's religious toleration was spurious, so was his discussion of the nature of kingship between the prelate and James Stuart. The synopsis provided above of the political principles in the *Vie* do, however, mirror the principles expounded in the *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil*. Ramsay's connection of Fénelon with the cause of James Stuart's restoration to the British throne provides the reason for Ramsay's endeavours as a biographer. Ramsay exploited the fame of Fénelon and *Télémaque* to attach the Jacobites to his anti-absolutist position on government and his (created) religious toleration. The *Vie* was used to show James Stuart as Telemachus to Fénelon's Mentor, a suitable king for Britain, who despite his Catholicism would be tolerant in a Protestant country and who would eschew the absolutist tendencies of his father James II. The *Vie* and *Essay* were used in juxtaposition, and the *Essay* was an expanded demonstration of the political principles of the Archbishop of Cambrai: except they were not. The problem for later biographers and political theorists is that, as the sentiments expressed in the *Essay* were confirmed by the *Vie*, some biographers began to develop a distorted picture of Fénelon's political thought; and if they did not, many followed Ramsay's pre-occupation with the early educational works over his (neglected) later reform works. To this

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<sup>32</sup> Fénelon, *Tables de Chaulnes, Oeuvres, Tome II*, 1099.

day, *Télémaque* is primarily discussed to delineate Fénelon's political theory. Yet this was a work that was written for a young prince to amuse and edify him with moral lessons of kingship. It was a work that Fénelon believed to be imperfect, it was unfinished when stolen by a copyist and published in 1699, and remained unfinished on Fénelon's death.<sup>33</sup> The work's runaway success throughout Europe perhaps explains a public fixation with this particular work when discussing Fénelon's political principles. What is more surprising, was that as the editor of his papers, Ramsay did not move beyond the influence of this work, and the *Dialogues des Morts*, to share with the public Fénelon's later important political thought that wanted to reform the French monarchy.<sup>34</sup>

## 2

In his own work on monarchy and civil government, Ramsay's *Essay* propounded a set of principles that were also not Fénelonian. If one considers the link between Ramsay's work and his association with the Jacobites, it was perhaps not that surprising, as claiming a link to

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. I, 315-17.

<sup>34</sup> Fénelon's political works fall into two distinct periods: the educational works (1689-95) and the reform works (1701-12). The gap between the two sets of work is explained by Fénelon's distraction due to the Quietism Affair from 1696, his subsequent exile to Cambrai, and the prohibiting of his contact with Bourgoigne. Contact was instigated by an eighteen year-old Bourgoigne on 22nd December 1701: '*Enfin, mon cher Archevêque, je trouve une occasion favorable de rompre le silence où j'ai demeuré depuis quatre ans,*' *Correspondance de Fénelon, Tome X*, (ed) Jacques Le Brun (Genève: 1989), 214.

Fénelon tied the *Essay* with his fame. Connecting the work to Fénelon was a device to interest a readership hungry for more of Fénelon's political thought,<sup>35</sup> while relying on his notoriety as an anti-absolutist. Ramsay's '*plan de gouvernement*,'<sup>36</sup> wanted to promote a monarchy that could act in the '*dernier ressort*' and prevent another 1689 Revolution without being viewed as absolutist. This was necessary for his the aim of the *Essay*, which was to endorse the return of James Stuart, a Catholic king to the Protestant British throne. Yet, of the three occasions within the *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil* when Ramsay cited Fénelon's *Télémaque*, only the first, on the burdens of kingship, was accurate.<sup>37</sup> The other two occasions were both misuses of Fénelon's arguments: the above mentioned claim he supported religious toleration, and the idea of creating virtue within the nobility by using them '*à server l'Etat*.'<sup>38</sup>

Ramsay's discussion of the utilisation of the nobility is an apt starting point with which to compare the principles extolled in the *Essay* and the principles found in the political work of Fénelon. Ramsay's desire to use the nobility to assist the sovereign in civil government was central to his '*plan de gouvernement*,' which relied upon '*monarchie modérée par*

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<sup>35</sup> Albert Cherel, *Fénelon au XVIIIe Siècle en France (1715-1820): Son Prestige – Son Influence*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Ramsay, *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil*, ii.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 80-81. The quotation claims to be taken from page 247 of *livre XII* of *Télémaque* (Paris: 1717), but is actually a paraphrased amalgamation from pp. 246-48.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 179-80. The reference in the *Essay* claims to be from '*livr. 12, p. 466*' but this page number is incorrect as *livre XII* ends on page 267. I have been unable to locate the exact quote within the *livre*, or in fact, *Télémaque*, but it appears to be loosely based on Mentor's survey of Salente (*livre XII*).

*l'aristocratie*.<sup>39</sup> While Book XII of the 1717 edition of *Télémaque* described the need for all citizens to be involved in the state, and for none to be idle, the extent of Mentor's discussion was the reward of the nobility (and others) who acted virtuously in service of the state.<sup>40</sup> Ramsay used his citation of *Télémaque* to expand Fénelon's meaning, thereby encompassing a '*plan*' which would harness the idle nobility (under Louis XIV) in the service of the state. This is an interesting concept, for while it does not exist within *Télémaque* it can be found within the *Tables de Chaulnes*, a work Ramsay never publicly engaged with. In the *Tables*, Fénelon asserted that the nobility had been corrupted and impoverished by the luxury of court and its inability to earn money under Louis XIV.<sup>41</sup> They were a vital resource to France that had been neglected and it was essential that the nobility worked rather than sit idle and in poverty. This meant that they would be allowed to undertake 'wholesale trade' and would be free to enter the magistracy.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, for Fénelon, part of the problem of Louis XIV's France was that there were too many nobles, many of them newly created, who drained the state and lived a life of idleness. Fénelon's reforms tackled this issue and enabled the nobility to work in the service of the king and state as they had done in the past, thereby removing the need to provide for them.<sup>43</sup>

However, Fénelon's plans to reform the French nobility and monarchy did not correspond with Ramsay's '*plan*' of the *Essay*. For Fénelon, the entire internal administration was to be reformed. Local government would be reformed through the establishment of an *Assiete*, a

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<sup>39</sup> See Chapter XV of the *Essay*.

<sup>40</sup> Fénelon, *Les aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse, Tome Premier*, 254.

<sup>41</sup> Fénelon, *Tables de Chaulnes*, (ed) Jacques Le Brun, 1100.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 1101.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 1102.

small assembly in each diocese, such as in Languedoc. Each region would be able to control their own police, funds, election, and use of taxation, while contributing to the state's expense. This would be possible through general levies on goods such as salt, and would remove the need for financiers. For France, there would be an '*établissement d'États généraux*.'<sup>44</sup> The deputies would be free in their parliamentary behaviour and voting, and while their duty was to serve the king they were there to serve the interests of their region. Composition of the Estates-General would be taken from '*l'évêque de chaque diocese, d'un seigneur d'ancienne et haute noblesse, élu par les nobles,*' and '*d'un homme considerable du tiers-état, élu par le tiers-état*.'<sup>45</sup> Elections would be free and devoid of any interference from the king. The Estates would be superior to the *Assietes* and have the power to overturn important decisions, but its function would be to discuss issues of key importance to France. This would mean issues such as 'extraordinary expenditure,' war, maritime policies on trade, justice, the police, finance, alliances, peace negotiations, agriculture, and trade. The Estates would also be responsible for '*pour abolir tous privilégiés, toutes lettres d'état abusives,*' and '*tout commerçant d'argent sans merchandise, excepté les banquiers nécessaires*.'<sup>46</sup> The Estates therefore, would aid the reform of France both politically and through wider policy that would reach out throughout the entire state.

Ramsay's discussion of sovereignty and monarchy was rather confused in many ways. In the first twelve chapters of the *Essay* he advocated an absolutist system of monarchy, which was diametrically opposed to *Télémaque*, before proposing a system in which the power of monarchy was moderated by the nobility. The key to this confusion was Ramsay's desire to

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 1090.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 1091.



provide a model of government that would be able to withstand the peoples' desire for liberty, and their recourse to anarchy and rebellion if this was not achieved: as in 1689. '*Il faut donc nécessairement*' for Ramsay, '*que tout Gouvernement soit absolu*'<sup>47</sup> and had the ability to act in the '*dernier ressort*.'<sup>48</sup> Ramsay excluded the idea of popular involvement in government of the state, as the examples provided by Rome and England historically revealed that this involvement led to the ruination of the state.<sup>49</sup> The only possible way to counteract such intentions was to maintain a sovereignty that was indivisible, and which relied upon God's natural order in which men were unequal and kingship was affirmed through patriarchal subordination.<sup>50</sup> While subordination was not the source of sovereign authority it was a '*canal*' through which this authority passed to men,<sup>51</sup> ensuring a natural order in which a few men were born to rule as kings, but most were born to submit as subjects. Peace and unity were assured through law, which enshrined the positions of king and people, and never permitting a rebellion<sup>52</sup> which would attack God's order (Providence). The law and the king's absolute power over his subjects - which included over their actions, persons, and goods<sup>53</sup> - ensured the public good, and should prevent a king from acting arbitrarily. To uphold the public good for the citizens, a king should not attempt to control their internal religious faith, he should not violate the people, and he should be motivated by the public

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<sup>47</sup> Ramsay, *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil*, 36.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 37.

<sup>49</sup> See *Essay*, chapitres xiii and xiv.

<sup>50</sup> *Essay*, 44-46.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* 51

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* 102.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* 108-9.

good.<sup>54</sup> In reality, while all forms of government contained weakness, strong government could only be maintained by the undivided sovereignty of monarchy. According to Ramsay, *‘ce partage de la souveraineté, loin de faire un équilibre de Puissances, en causent souvent le combat perpetual.’*<sup>55</sup>

After discussing the failure of mixed government, and the dangers of popular involvement in government through the historical examples of Rome and England, Ramsay then advocated a system which divided sovereignty. In Ramsay’s system of *‘monarchie modérée par l’aristocratie’* (chapter XV) the people were excluded from any means of power, but the nobility were elevated so that they would restrain the power of the monarch. Ramsay’s argument had evolved to suggest that while the king held the greatest share in power, he should not have the power alone to make the law, as the nobility should be involved in the legislative. *‘Il ne faut pas que l’Autorité Royale soit l’unique & la seule puissance de l’Etat,’* claimed Ramsay, particularly as a king could not see or know everything himself. The nobility would therefore also act as councillors, *‘non-seulement pour instruire le Prince de l’état de la Patrie, mais pour l’empêcher de tender au Despotisme tyrannique.’*<sup>56</sup> Both the monarchy and aristocracy would be hereditary to ensure rank and order within society, and the ancient validity of this most natural form of government. A model that had its foundation in paternal empire: a family (state) headed by a father (king) who seeks the counsel of his wise children (nobility).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 112-14.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 127-28.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 171

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 181.

The purpose of this model of government was two-fold. Firstly, it was an attempt by Ramsay to support the deficiencies of monarchy by utilising the nobility, as an advisory body, part of the legislative and controlling mechanism on any monarchical intention to abuse its power. A government of monarchy moderated by aristocracy, according to Ramsay, allowed the three rights of sovereignty to remain intact: the military power, the legislative power, and the power of raising subsidies.<sup>58</sup> The first right would remain the king's alone, the second would be shared with the nobility, and the third would evoke the ancient French custom of seeking the people's consent of the people (through the states) in levying extraordinary taxes. This was to be the people's only involvement in government, and they were to be excluded from sovereign authority.<sup>59</sup> This led to Ramsay's second and more important purpose for his '*plan de gouvernement*:' the control of popular power. Ramsay's model of government, was an attack on the sentiment expressed by supporters of the 1689 Revolution that government and the monarchical succession could be changed, and that the power of the people could be enhanced. As a work that promoted the Jacobite cause, Ramsay's *Essay* was designed to attack ideas that government was a free contract or that government propitiated equality and natural rights. For Ramsay, this was false. His government reflected a divine law in which man was inherently unequal and in which the people had no natural rights or a right to make the law. What was natural, was a divine order in which rank ensured that the multitude were governed by the few not the many. While government and life meant suffering, of all the evils in the world the worst was '*Anarchie*'

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* 184.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* 172-74.

and the '*fureurs de la multitude*;' i.e revolutions such as 1689 which attacked God's ordered world.<sup>60</sup>

The public good of society for Ramsay, which was a fundamental law of government, argued that a king was accountable to God for his behaviour. In Ramsay's system this meant that it was the king's right to control the actions, persons and goods of his subjects in a manner that protected the health and happiness of the state. Yet, this idea of the public good was a very different idea to the one expressed by Fénelon, and the distinction can be summarized thus: for Ramsay the people were to be used for the needs of the king (state), and for Fénelon the king existed for his people's needs. The starting position of Fénelon's political philosophy was entirely different to that of Ramsay's system, and despite being an Archbishop, Fénelon's view of government and law was civil rather than divine. Fénelon eschewed Ramsay's reliance on divine law and providence as the basis of the state, and depicted a government firmly embedded in the temporal realm.<sup>61</sup> Law, according to Fénelon, represented an objective guide and bond between the monarch and the people. The '*fonction principale de celui qui gouverne les peuples est de leur donner des lois qui règlent tout ensemble le roi et les peuples pour les rendre bons et heureux.*'<sup>62</sup> The law was a guide for the king's behaviour towards his people, and unlike the present government (Louis XIV) a king should pursue the law to guarantee the state remained healthy: '*Il peut tout sur les peuples*;

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* 198

<sup>61</sup> Fénelon, *Examen de conscience sur les devoirs de la Royauté, Oeuvres, Tome II*, (ed) Jacques Le Brun, 973-74.

<sup>62</sup> Fénelon, *Dialogues des Morts, Oeuvres, Tome I*, (ed) Jacques Le Brun, XIII, 318.

*mais les loix peuvent tout sur lui. Il a une puissance absolue pour faire le bien, & les mains liées dès qu'il veut faire le mal.*'<sup>63</sup>

The law's representation of the public good was vital to the stability and efficacy of the state, its government, the king, and importantly, the people. It was the foundation of the king's power and authority as it enshrined the public good, protected the people from the king, and the king from the people. The law acted as a bridle for the king's concern regarding the liberty of the people, which could lead to them rebelling against the king. The law made certain that the '*liberté du peuple*' would be restrained by establishing laws and '*non pas renverser les lois pour tyranniser le peuple.*'<sup>64</sup> Moreover, law emphasized that the '*despotisme du peuple est une puissance folle et aveugle, qui se tourney contre elle-même, et qui n'est absolue au-dessus des lois que pour achever de se détruire.*'<sup>65</sup> The multitude may fulminate, riot and rebel, they may even assassinate the king, but they offered no political alternative to the monarch.

The power of the law and its dependence on the natural subordination of the people towards the ruler and the laws always returned the people to natural obedience. Unlike Ramsay's divine and patriarchal subordination, Fénelon relied upon reason which regulated, pacified and united society. The people understood that it was reasonable to obey the laws and that it concurred with the '*besoins et aux interest communs.*'<sup>66</sup> A good citizen understood that it was perfectly reasonable to want to exercise their liberty to its full extent. By this, Fénelon meant the recourse to rebel and execute a tyrannical monarch prohibited by Ramsay,

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<sup>63</sup> *Télémaque, Tome première*, V, 89.

<sup>64</sup> *Dialogues des Morts*, XVII, 332.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* XVI, 186.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* XXXIV, 379.

but which, Fénelon argued, the dictates of reason generally prevented as it was too damaging to society. To behave according to this principle was to be a good citizen.<sup>67</sup> To ensure that a king's subjects remained good citizens, the king must simply follow the law and promote a public good that was firmly based on the welfare of the people.

Fénelon's care for the people and their needs, was highlighted by his pre-occupied by war, and this was reflected in all of his political writings. This is unsurprising given the frequency of France's wars under Louis XIV (1638-1715),<sup>68</sup> but it marks a clear distinction with Ramsay's *Essay* which does not discuss war in any detail. Louis XIV's endless pursuit of glory and aggrandisement through war was a theme that translated easily into Fénelon's use of classical myth as a teaching tool for a young prince. In the *Dialogues* Fénelon used Achilles, that paragon of classical empty glory to denounce war.<sup>69</sup> Any glory achieved in war was historically transient, and a king's individual glory did not outweigh the suffering experienced by the people: '*La guerre est un mal qui déshonore le genre humain.*'<sup>70</sup> However, wars continued to be fought frequently due to kings' lust for power and fame regardless of their peoples' welfare.<sup>71</sup> Ultimately, this pursuit of power was paradoxical as it

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* 380.

<sup>68</sup> Louis XIV's reign was characterized by frequent wars such as: the Thirty Years War (1618-48); the Fronde (1648-53); War of Devolution (1667-68); the Dutch War (1672-78); the Nine Years War (1688-97), and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-14).

<sup>69</sup> Fénelon, *Dialogues des Morts*, IV, 286.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* XVII, 330.

<sup>71</sup> *Télémaque*, Tome première, Book VIII, 170. In Dialogue XXV of the *Dialogues des Morts*, Fénelon used Alexander the Great as an example of such a glory-enthused conqueror.

could lead to a king's ruin.<sup>72</sup> Fénelon's solution for Bourgogne was to praise the glory and strength found in the maintenance of peace. Peace not only avoided the destruction and cost of war, it promoted the happiness of the people and thereby the king. Consequently, it augmented the king's standing, at home and abroad, as a peaceful king was viewed as 'just, moderate, and easy' by his neighbouring states.<sup>73</sup>

The subject of war was the continual starting point for Fénelon, especially in his later works. The *Examen de Conscience sur les Devoirs de la Royauté* (1702), the *Tables de Chaulnes* (1711), and the *Mémoires sur les précautions et les mesures à prendre après la mort du Duc de Bourgogne* (1712) were a concerted desire and effort to reform the French monarchy.<sup>74</sup> Unlike Ramsay's desire to strengthen the position of the monarch through a system in which the monarchy was aided (and moderated) by the nobility, Fénelon's plans were devised to make government more inclusive. The reforms encompassed practical changes throughout the entirety of the French state to move the state away from the absolutism, war, and luxury of Louis XIV's regime toward a France reliant on wider government, peace, and frugality. The *Tables* were created by Fénelon with the assistance of the Duc de Chevreuse, for Bourgogne when he had become the heir to the throne. The *Tables de Chaulnes* also known as the *Plans de Gouvernement*, are a list of pithy points and maxims called *Tables*. The reforms proposed in the *Tables* focused on seven categories: the military, court expenditure, internal administration, the Church, the nobility, justice, and commerce.

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<sup>72</sup> *Télémaque, Tome première*, Book X, 209. The irrationality and historical devastation wrought by Louis' wars were denounced by Fénelon in *Lettre à Louis XIV*, written c. 1693-94. See *Oeuvres, Tome I*, (ed) Jacques Le Brun, 543-551.

<sup>73</sup> *Télémaque, Tome première*, Book V, 102-3.

<sup>74</sup> See the notes by Jacques Le Brun in *Fénelon's Oeuvres, Tome II*, 1664-67.

The *Tables* began by stating a need for an immediate cessation of war,<sup>75</sup> as the establishment of peace in France would provide the opportunity to begin reform. Peace would allow a dramatic cut in military expenditure through troops and garrisons and would enable France to rely on a reduced army of 150,000 men to protect the nation. The cuts made from Louis XIV's pursuit of war would be followed by cuts made at court.<sup>76</sup> Calculations would be made to understand how much revenue the state had and how much was wasted, such as on the king's household and court through wages and pensions. In doing so, waste and excessive expenditure of the rapacious court would be stopped, allowing the general reform of France as well as the '*rétablir l'agriculture, les arts utiles,*' and '*le commerce.*' The ideas on the nature of commerce and the ill-effects of luxury moved from the theoretical proposals of Salente, to a matter-of-fact plan for reducing the French debt in order to rebuild the state.<sup>77</sup>

Fénelon's desire to reform France was emphasized by his composition of the *Mémoires sur les précautions et les mesures à prendre après la mort du Duc de Bourgogne* within weeks of the Dauphin's death.<sup>78</sup> The need for expeditious reform meant that Fénelon persuaded Beauvilliers to use his influence on Madame de Maintenon, who attempted to

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<sup>75</sup> *Tables de Chaulnes, Oeuvres, Tome II*, (ed) Jacques Le Brun, 1085.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 1088.

<sup>77</sup> For the discussion of Salente see *Télémaque, Tome première*, XI, or Hont, "The early enlightenment debate on commerce and luxury," *Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought, Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>78</sup> Fénelon in his grief at the death of Burgundy wrote on 27<sup>th</sup> February to Chevreuse, 'Alas! My good Duke, God has shattered all our fondest hopes for Church and state,' *Selected Letters of Fénelon*, (ed) John McEwen (London: Harvill Press, 1964), 178.



convince Louis to enact the plan, but the king rejected it.<sup>79</sup> The work reflected real concerns held by Fénelon about the potential transfer of power after the death of an elderly king and an infant heir. The issue of internal security once more was used as the foundation for future plans. Peace had to be assured in France while Louis XIV was still alive, for a regency France had much to fear excluding war. The potential threats were both external (other states) and internal, such as discontented classes, princes excluded from the regency, the Huguenots, undisciplined troops, and those who were owed money by France. Peace would be enhanced by the immediate creation of a '*conseil de régence*' while Louis XIV was alive.<sup>80</sup> It would be essential to the 'council' that the king would be involved, to ensure that issues such as the national debt were tackled without delay while relying on his status and position.

Fénelon's 'council' would be comprised from the 'assembly of notables,' composed of members from the Burgundy Circle such as Beauvilliers, Chevreuse, Saint-Simon, and de Tallard,<sup>81</sup> other ministers and secretaries of state, and would be headed by the grandson of

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<sup>79</sup> See Cardinal Bausset, *The Life of Fénelon*, Vol. II, 241-42.

<sup>80</sup> Fénelon, *Mémoires sur les precautions et les mesures a prendre après la mort du duc de Bourgogne, 15 mars 1712* in Tome Onzième, *Oeuvres de Fénelon* (Paris: Dufour, 1826), 92.

<sup>81</sup> The Burgundy Circle was a group of nobles who surrounded and advised the Duc de Bourgogne, and helped him to plan the reform of France and the monarchy. For a concise assessment of the Burgundy Circle and their potential plans to reform France, see Sanford B. Kanter, "Archbishop Fénelon's Political Activity: The Focal Point of Power in Dynasticism," in *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Spring 1966), pp. 320-34, Duke University Press; and Harold A. Ellis, particularly in chapter three, in *Boulainvilliers and the French Monarchy, Aristocratic Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century France*. Cornell: 1988.

Louis XIV, the Duc de Berry (1686-1714). The council would have two main functions. The first, was the education of the young Dauphin until his majority, using a curriculum that could be set by Louis XIV. The second function, carried out with the king's authorization, was the use of the council '*qui est conforme au gouvernement de la nation*.'<sup>82</sup> The council, registered with the *Parlement* of Paris, would assemble at least six times a year. Its councils would replace the single secretaries of state, and in a manner redolent of the *Tables*, power would be devolved throughout the nation to a greater extent. Less power would be concentrated in the monarch as more would be devolved to the council, the Estates-general, and the *Assietes*.<sup>83</sup> While Fénelon foresaw dreadful difficulties, he believed that to tackle the problems faced by France it was necessary to radically depart the absolutism of Louis XIV's rule. Fénelon recognized that Louis's extremely long reign - '*Depuis long-temps la nation n'est plus accoutumée qu'à la volonté absolue d'un seul maître*'<sup>84</sup> – was hugely problematic for France. If the king died, and plans were not made for the succession, government would have to unify and organize itself in an attempt to stabilize the state and a people without Louis XIV. By assembling the council immediately to run government and tackle the issues of France, a 'Polysynody' would allow for a smooth transition of power. The existence of the council could then be used as a platform for the reform of France while continuing to run the state when the Dauphin entered maturity. France would therefore depart from an absolutist system of monarchy and move toward a government that relied upon this council, the Estates-general, and local assemblies comprised of men from all three Estates, in a constitutional monarchy.

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<sup>82</sup> Fénelon, *Mémoires sur les precautions et les mesures a prendre après la mort du duc de Bourgogne*, 15 mars 1712, 98.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 97-8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* 99.

Ramsay's *Vie de Fénelon* was tied to the *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil* through the ostensible political conversations between Fénelon and James Stuart. These conversations, which Ramsay did not witness, reveal through the *Dedication* of the *Essay* to James Stuart, a concerted effort to use these works for the promotion of Jacobitism.

Ramsay's portrayal of James Stuart's political instruction by Fénelon in the principles of civil government according to *Télémaque* (and the *Dialogues des Morts*), imply a patronage of this modern Telemachus' plight by the Archbishop. However, the lessons conveyed in the *Vie* and extended in the *Essay* do not reflect the principles manifest in Fénelon's political works. Ramsay's depiction of a theory based on divine authority (providence), law, patriarchy, and subordination did not correspond with Fénelon's earlier educational works. Moreover, Ramsay's promotion of a government system of '*monarchie modérée par l'aristocratie*' does not originate in either period of Fénelon's political work: the educational works (1689-95) and the reform plans (1701-12). For Fénelon, particularly in his later reform plans for an adult Bourgogne, civil government should be augmented to include the wider influence of the people on government (and monarchy), it did not exclude it. Ramsay's concentration on *Télémaque* as Fénelon's editor and first biographer - juxtaposed with its success - helped to foster a fascination with the work to the detriment of all of Fénelon's other political works. While the key areas of Fénelon's interest are represented in *Télémaque*, such as kingship, war and commerce, the real political theorist is found in his later output. It is here that his pragmatic plans to reform and modernize the French monarchy and government under Bourgogne exist. Yet throughout Fénelon's political works there is a manifest variance between his principles and those extant in Ramsay's works. It is a divergence that Ramsay attempted to mask in his support of Jacobitism, and a concealment that has profoundly affected Fénelon's legacy as a political theorist.